

Americans who have been in that position and, regardless of partisan differences, whose allegiance to America is unquestioned.

We need to start now to protect the integrity of the most powerful position on the planet.

BLACK LUNG BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. JENKINS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, my home State of West Virginia has almost 20,000 coal miners. Tens of thousands more worked in the mines and are now enjoying a well-deserved retirement.

They proudly mined the coal that powers our Nation, and it puts food on their table. These miners worked hard each and every day, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Our Nation made them a promise to take care of them if they developed black lung disease. And for decades now, the Federal Government has guaranteed black lung benefits, and the so-called Byrd amendment 7 years ago reiterated that commitment to our miners.

As we draft healthcare reform here in Congress, I urge my colleagues to maintain these essential black lung benefits for our miners and their families.

I have introduced legislation to affirm our commitment to protecting the Byrd amendment and these critical black lung benefits. I introduced it last Congress, too, and I am committed to continuing to fight for it because we cannot let our miners down.

While mine safety continues to improve, we must guarantee that our miners have the benefits they need in case they are diagnosed with black lung disease. These benefits provide critical support for our retired miners and their families. For some disabled miners, it may be the only income they have. In West Virginia, almost 5,000 families rely on these benefits.

This is a promise we made to them, and it is a promise that we must keep. Just as we have relied on our miners to mine the coal that built the skyscrapers and won world wars, our miners should be able to rely on us.

I urge my colleagues to support the protection of black lung benefits and to honor the hard work of our miners.

A GLACIER OF RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, we are in a constitutional crisis. Make no mistake about it. Yes, the National Security Adviser Michael Flynn resigned. Yes, he should have resigned, but he is just the tip of the iceberg. A glacier of Russian interference is plaguing our country right now.

In his resignation letter, General Flynn wrote: "I have always performed my duties with the utmost of integrity and honesty to those I have served, to include the President of the United States."

I believe General Flynn. I believe he did precisely what the President of the United States asked him to do. General Flynn is a military man. He is accustomed to the chain of command. He did not do anything that he was not asked to do. He was not a rogue agent, but had the complete knowledge and cooperation of his Commander in Chief.

We have all heard Donald Trump boast of how smart he is and how he calls his own shots. Why then should we believe that, when it comes to national security, he prefers to be kept in the dark? A President can't be both in charge and out of the loop.

The only way we can ever hope to know what happened is if there is a thorough investigation. I believe it should be an independent investigation, an independent commission. But if we are going to go down the route of having it be a congressional investigation, then it needs to be a comprehensive investigation and one that has the resources to do the job.

I am calling on Chairman NUNES of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to schedule hearings immediately.

We heard 14 hours of testimony from Secretary Clinton about her emails. I think we can agree that foreign infiltration of our government at the highest level is at least as important as using a private email server, especially, I might add, when President Trump and his team used unencrypted cell phones during their North Korea strategy session at Mar-a-Lago in a dining room with many other guests.

Today, an Active Duty, four-star general said publicly that "our government continues to be in unbelievable turmoil" and that he hopes "they sort it out soon, because we're a nation at war."

He continues: "As a commander, I'm concerned our government be as stable as possible."

It is critical that Congress takes heed of this unprecedented public warning and act.

I am well aware this is a partisan institution. I also know that there have been times in our proud history in the United States Congress when Members have pushed partisanship aside in search of the truth. The Warren Commission, following the assassination of President Kennedy, is one example. The 9/11 Commission after the terrorist attacks in 2001 is another.

In the Senate, at least three Republicans have directly called for investigations into this matter and several more have acknowledged that these questions must be answered. I wonder, will one House Republican Member come forward and say we must investigate?

Colleagues, I urge you to think this through. Vladimir Putin ordered

agents to meddle in our election. Did he do it out of love for Mr. Trump? I doubt it. More likely, he did it so he could do to a democracy what we and our allies did to communism, send it to the ash heap of history. If America's elections can be hacked, what chance is there for budding democracies to make it?

Don't believe me? Look at what Putin has done in just 3 weeks of this new administration. He had government agents poisoned. He sent a political rival to prison. He sent \$12 million to Jean-Marie Le Pen, the far-right candidate for the President of France. His latest move was to launch a cruise missile that is in direct defiance of treaties.

Putin's Russia is playing chicken with President Trump, and what is our President's response? A tweet complaining about leaks within his administration and, according to the latest reports, pressuring the Prime Minister of Japan to forge closer relations with Russia.

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President Trump's "bromance" is dangerous. It undermines our democracy, and it is destabilizing the globe.

What does Putin have on President Trump? What does President Trump owe Putin?

We will not know until we exercise U.S. Code section 6103. A vote yesterday in Ways and Means was a totally partisan vote. We deserve to know what his tax return shows us. We deserve the truth.

CALIFORNIA'S MARCH TO THE EXTREME LEFT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, one of the most troubling aspects of California's lurch to the left are the rise of two doctrines unknown in this country since the last gasp of the Southern Confederacy.

The first is the doctrine of nullification, the notion that States may defy Federal laws that their leaders simply don't like. The most outspoken advocate of this doctrine was John C. Calhoun, who, in referencing our Nation's most-revered document, the Declaration of Independence, observed that our Nation had been founded on—his words—"self-evident lies."

The doctrine of nullification has been revived in the sanctuary cities movement, and has now reared its head as State legislation. Our Constitution clearly gives Congress the sole prerogative to make immigration law, and it commands the President to faithfully execute these laws. Our President is now doing so. Yet, California's legislature is actively considering a bill that would assert an independent power to defy them. And this is not just happening in California.